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ABSTRACT

Rapid demographic changes and an increasing recognition of the critical need for professionals who are proficient in languages other than English have led to an interest in developing language programs and classes for "heritage language learners" students who are raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken and who speak or at least understand that language. The fastest growing heritage language population in the United States is Hispanic Americans, and the number of Spanish speakers studying Spanish is on the rise. As a result, language educators are developing programs, classes, and instructional strategies to address the needs of these students, which are different from those of native-English-speaking students studying Spanish as a foreign language. Appropriate instructional materials are essential for these classes, which are often referred to as Spanish for Spanish speakers (SNS) classes. Although the development of SNS materials has a 30-year history, and many new SNS textbooks and materials continue to appear, developing a well-articulated sequence for SNS instruction continues to be a challenge. The purpose of this digest is to raise awareness of the range of SNS materials available to teachers and school districts, and to emphasize the importance of articulated SNS programs with well-sequenced materials. It describes published resources that list and review available SNS materials and gives an overview of the types of materials available. It also provides guidelines for selecting textbooks and other materials for SNS classes or for classes with both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students. (VWL)

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Selecting Materials to Teach Spanish to Spanish Speakers

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Rapid demographic changes and an increasing recognition of the critical need for professionals who are proficient in languages other than English (Brecht & Rivers, 2000; Carreira & Armengol, 2001) have led to an interest in developing language programs and classes for "heritage language learners"—students who are raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken and who speak or at least understand that language (Valdés, 2001). The fastest growing heritage language population in the United States is Hispanic Americans (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2001), and the number of Spanish speakers studying Spanish is on the rise. As a result, language educators are developing programs, classes, and instructional strategies to address the needs of these students, which are different from those of native-English-speaking students studying Spanish as a foreign language. Appropriate instructional materials are essential for these classes, which are often referred to as Spanish for Spanish speakers (SNS) classes. Although the development of SNS materials has a 30-year history, and many new SNS textbooks and materials continue to appear, developing a well-articulated sequence for SNS instruction continues to be a challenge (Peyton, Lewelling, & Winke, 2001).

The purpose of this digest is twofold—to raise awareness of the range of SNS materials available to teachers and school districts, and to emphasize the importance of articulated SNS programs with well-sequenced materials. It describes published resources that list and review available SNS materials and gives an overview of the types of materials available. It also provides guidelines for selecting textbooks and other materials for SNS classes or for classes with both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking students.

Resources for Selecting SNS Instructional Materials

Reports of textbooks and materials for SNS instruction have existed since the 1970s (see, e.g., Valdés-Fallis & Teschner, 1977). More recently, the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (2000) has published a handbook for K-16 teachers that includes a list of 29 secondary- and college-level SNS textbooks.

The National Foreign Language Center, in collaboration with the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL), has developed an extensive bibliography of textbooks and materials used for SNS instruction in K-12 and university classes, derived from a survey of Spanish programs across the country (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2001). Materials in the bibliography are annotated and coded by search criteria that include level of instruction, content focus and skills developed, cost, publisher, and date of publication. This bibliography will be available on the National Foreign Language Center's Project REACH Web site, a Web-based resource for the teaching of Spanish and Hispanic and Latino cultures to heritage Spanish speakers, under development by the NFLC and AATSP.

CAL has produced an online resource guide (Roca, Marcos, & Winke, 2001) that lists curricula and teaching materials for SNS instruction and links to the publishers. The guide also includes information about the LangNet Web site; SNS Web sites; and SNS journal articles, books, conferences, and summer institutes for teachers.

Many publishers of SNS materials have Web pages or catalog sections devoted to SNS materials, including the following:

Houghton Mifflin College Division
http://college.hmco.com/languages/spanish/instructors/
Holt, Rinehart and Winston
http://www.hrw.com/world/spanish/
McGraw Hill Higher Education
http://www.mhhe.com/catalogs/hss/spanish/
Prentice Hall
http://vig.prenhall.com/catalog/academic/modernlanguages
Prentice Hall School Group
http://www.phschool.com/catalog/

Information provided by publishing companies should be used with caution, however. Publishers may claim that their materials can be used for SNS instruction when in reality they were not created to address the needs of Spanish-speaking students in Spanish classes.

Types of SNS Materials Available

The range of SNS textbooks and materials now available represents the expanding diversification within the growing SNS field. Many SNS textbooks are part of well-developed instructional series that have supplementary workbooks, readers, multimedia supplements, and Web sites with online activities, including *Español Escrito: Curso Para Hispanohablantes Bilingües* (4th ed.) (Valdés & Teschner, 1999); *Nuevos Mundos* (Roca, 1999); *Selecciones Literarias* (Kiraithe-Córdova, 2000); and the revised *Nuestro Mundo: Curso Para Hispanohablantes* (Samaniego, Alarcón, Rojas, & Gorman, 2002).

States such as Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas have large, well-established SNS programs where the instruction of Spanish-speaking students is carried out in classes separate from English-speaking students (Valdés, 1997). However, not all school programs have enough Spanish-speaking students to consistently support separate classroom instruction for them. One public school teacher responding to a 2001 survey about her use of SNS materials wrote that at her school "there are several native speakers who elect to take Spanish each year thinking it an 'easy grade.'" She added that district staff wonder if they should purchase alternative texts for these students, who are now in traditional Spanish classes, or form special sections just for them. Unfortunately, small numbers of such students have so far made separate classes impossible in this district.

No matter how small the population of Spanish-speaking students, they need not go without specialized instruction and materials that will build on their existing language competencies while addressing their particular language needs, developing their literacy skills, and fostering their bilingualism. Some newer textbook series, such as *Juntos* by Prentice Hall School Group and *¡Ven Conmigo!* by Holt, Rinehart and Winston, provide course textbooks that are written for use by both Spanish and English speakers in mixed classes, while separate sets of workbooks and ancillary materials are offered for the different groups. The series *Mundo 21* (Samaniego, Rojas, Ohara, & Alarcón, 2001) has "heritage language components," which include a textbook edition for SNS—the *Edición Alternativa*—and ancillary materials such as an SNS workbook, *Cuaderno de Actividades Para Hispanohablantes*.

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Guidelines for Selecting SNS Materials

Westbury (1990) states, "The textbooks teachers have are the most significant resource for their teaching and often the most significant limiting force they face as they seek to accomplish their purposes"(p. 1). We propose the following guidelines for selecting materials.

1. Know your student population.

Teachers selecting materials must know the grade level and Spanish proficiency levels of their students and the type of class in which the materials will be used. Students in a given class may include Spanish speakers only, English speakers only, or both Spanish speakers and English speakers. If the class includes both, one should consider whether it is possible to work effectively with both groups in the same class or whether they should be separated.

2. Know the language proficiency levels of your students.

Students who speak Spanish can have various levels of proficiency in both English and Spanish. Their skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking for each language must be assessed before instructional materials can be selected. Teachers may use locally or individually developed assessments or commercially available proficiency tests to determine students' proficiency levels. Otheguy and Toro (2000) describe published tests for SNS students at the elementary and high school levels. A challenge for SNS programs is the dearth of assessment materials and the lack of a national proficiency scale for benchmarking language competencies of SNS students. Therefore all materials, even those designed specifically for SNS students, must be reviewed to see if they match the student population to be taught.

3. Know about the technology available in your school and classrooms.

Many SNS instructional materials have multimedia packages in addition to textbooks. Consider whether technology-based materials, such as computer activities delivered via CD-ROM or the Web, DVD supplemental materials, cassette tapes, CDs, or video components are appropriate for your situation. Knowing what technical capabilities your school has will help to expand or limit your search.

4. Have clear goals and objectives in mind.

Teachers must consider the skills that students need to develop in light of the goals of the students and other stakeholders such as parents and district and state supervisors. Textbooks and materials for Spanish-speaking students may concentrate on oral language or on literacy skills. Some focus on grammar review, while others focus on critical thinking, phonetics, acquisition of standard Spanish varieties, or Spanish fluency.

5. Read published reviews of the materials.

Several journals have published reviews of SNS materials. The *Modern Language Journal* has printed reviews of *EntreMundos: An Integrated Approach for the Native Speaker* (Gynan, 1998) and *La Lengua que Heredamos, Spanish for Bilinguals* (Faingold, 1998). *Hispania* has published reviews of *Nuevos Destinos: Español Para Hispanohablantes* (Jelinski, 2001), *Avanzando: Gramática Español y Lectura* (4th ed.) (Lepeley, 1999), *Tu Mundo: Primer Curso Para Hispanohablantes* and *Nuestro Mundo: Segundo Curso Para Hispanohablantes* (Pardiñas-Barnes, 1998).

Conclusion

The expansion of the SNS field has seen simultaneous growth in the number of textbooks and materials designed for SNS instruction. Textbook demand has created a market for materials that can be used in separate classes or in mixed classes when separate instruction is not possible. Selection of textbooks for SNS classes or classes with mixed groups is a complicated process. Teachers and district supervisors must carefully and critically evaluate SNS materials before adopting them to ensure that they fit the proficiency levels and needs of their students and the goals of instruction. Finally, teachers who use SNS materials should consider submitting reviews of them to professional journals to aid other teachers in their own SNS textbook selection process.

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